

Restorative Justice Mass

Greetings and Announcements

A Word About Prison Focus Month

Concerns and Celebrations

Receiving of Gifts

Doxology

Praise God from who all blessing flow,
Praise God all creatures here below,
Praise God above ye, heavenly host,
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen

Prayer of Dedication

Prayer for Victims of Crime

Leader: God of Love and Healing. God of Love and Forgiveness. We pray for those who suffer because of the violence inflicted upon them by our criminal brothers and sisters. We ask that you be active in their grief. Bring to them your healing love. We pray that they be freed from their pain, their anger, and their desire for retribution. We pray that you will lead them to the path of forgiveness.

People: We pray in the name of Jesus whom you sent to be with us as an expression of your forgiveness. Amen.

Hymn: "Called as Partners in Christ's Service"

Reading: *Genesis 4:1-16*

Prayer for Prisoners and Jailers

Leader: God of Love and Judgment. God of Love and Redemption. We pray for those who live and work behind concrete walls, chain link fences and concertino wire. Keep them in good health and spirit. Help both the prisoner and the jailer to do the tasks before them with grace and compassion. Help both the prisoner and the jailer to see one another as human beings created in your own image. And protect both the prisoner and the jailer from those who would do them harm.

People: We pray in the name of Jesus who showed us how to love those who have done wrong against us. Amen.

Leader: God of Love and Crucifixion. God of Love and Resurrection. We join with other congregations across the nation today asking for a special blessing for the people who live and work on death row. May they find your grace and your peace. We pray for those who make decisions about the life and death of prisoners. We pray that you help them find ways to choose life and not death.

People: We pray in the name of Jesus who showed us the way to true life. Amen.

Reading: *Psalm 133*

Anthem: "Lily of the Valley" (Spiritual, arr. Wendell Whalum)

Prayer for Families

Leader: God of Love and Faithfulness. God of Love and Friendship. We pray for the other victims of crime—the families and friends of the offender. We can only imagine the grief and pain, the shame and ridicule, the emotional and physical hardships that mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, sons and daughters, extended family, and friends of prisoners experience during the incarceration of a loved one. We celebrate and learn from their steadfast faithfulness to their loved one who has done wrong. We ask that you be with them and sustain them through this time of separation and judgment. Give them the strength and the way to keep the family together. Provide for them the strength and the knowledge to help their loved one prepare for homecoming that this ordeal will not be repeated.

People: We pray in the name of Jesus who called us friend and taught us to be faithful. Amen.

Reading: Matthew 18:1-22

Sermon: "If You Do Well: The Vanity of Vengeance and the Restoration of Righteousness"

Prayer for the Church

Leader: God of Love and Discipleship. God of Love and Sacrifice. We pray that you provide within us the determination to follow your son Jesus who ate with sinners and comforted the outcast. Help us to focus our discipleship on those incarcerated in prisons and jails. But do not let us lose our outrage over the terrible acts of the offender. Help us to understand how we as a church might proclaim your redemptive love to a government and community that confuses vengeance with rehabilitation. But keep us from seeking simple solutions to complex issues. Help us to practice and proclaim restorative justice, that the broken offender and the broken victim might be restore to wholeness.

People: We pray in the name of Jesus who was able to forgive those who crucified him. Amen.

Invitation to Discipleship

Hymn no. 434: "Today We All Are Called to Be Disciples"

Benediction

Notes: Welcome to the worship service of Oakhurst Baptist Church. Today we begin Prison Focus Month. We also observe the National Weekend of Faith in Action on the Death Penalty, along with 50 other congregations in Atlanta and numerous faith communities across the country this weekend. Today's service was planned by the Prison & Jail Mission Group. You are invited to sign the Moratorium 2000 petition.